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## Abstract and Synthesis by Ashley Godbout

Abstract:

Chapter four highlights the importance of understanding curricular goals and once accomplished, successful differentiation can occur. Clarity about what students should know, understand, and be able to do at the end of a unit is extremely important in creating a learning environment that is relevant to each student in the class. When a teacher is clear about the understanding goals for a unit the teacher is more

equipped to offer students alternate routes to explore and express learning. In order for all students to be successful in our classroom we must get to know them personally but also what works for them academically; how do they learn best and what are their academic strengths and weaknesses. We can no longer expect students to complete the same tasks, given the same amount of time and materials. We are teaching a wide range of students and we need to keep in mind [instructional](#) strategies that support all their learning styles. Classrooms need differentiation and flexibility which holds students [accountable](#) for their own learning and goals. They begin to manage themselves and become more effective in addressing their learning needs. The goal of differentiation is to maximize each students growth by nurturing strengths and identifying weaknesses. It's important to focus on individual growth and progress through pre-assessments and ongoing observation of student work. This allows teachers to get a sense of their students' proficiency levels throughout a unit. The teacher can also focus on how to successfully differentiate tasks and assessments for each student without losing sight of curricular goals and understandings.

#### Synthesis:

Everyone thought chapter four was very interesting and contained a lot of useful information. Collectively, we thought it was important to cater to the individual needs of students so they can all be successful. People thought it was important to foster personal relationships with students; getting to know them and their learning capabilities is important for them to be successful in your classroom. If the teacher focuses on the understanding of the curriculum then meeting the learning needs of student's should come naturally. Teachers need to make sure their students understand curriculum goals and the expectations we have for them. This chapter focused more on how to differentiate instruction which was helpful for most of us. Other aspects of the chapter we thought were important were ones of classroom management. These include pre-assessment, make students feel comfortable in your class, classroom routines, allowing time for reflection. A lot of us thought creating a comfortable and safe place for students is extremely important for building trusting and respectful relationships and also to grow as learners.

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### Cole Phillips

In establishing an idea of how best to instruct students, or how best to let our students learn to their peak abilities, we determine the most constructive ways of getting there. While content retention is important and is the essential heart of the class, we must come to understand how best to make such content retainable. Through organizing and careful planning, we are more apt than in any other way to hit our respective marks.

An enormous aspect of planning for student success is planning for attention to student variance. Through differentiated instruction, we attest to the fact that there are different learning styles and rates, and that no student, regardless of degree of ability, should be or can be dismissed on the basis of his or her aptitude for typical or atypical learning. The most effective teachers are flexible in their classes, and host an ever-expanding repertoire of techniques and methods of student inclusion and student success. Effective teachers, indisputably, care more about personal growth of a student than anything else in their classrooms. Fostering personal, if professional, relationships with students is paramount to understanding such students' needs and wants in the classroom, and without such understanding, we, as teachers, are without a proper idea of how to, and without the proper tools to, create the best possible curriculum for

each and every individual.

## **Cheyenne**

“Learning has much more to do with one’s ability to organize and use ideas and skills to address problems than with the retention of data.” What a brilliant statement. I thoroughly agree with this, sure anyone can just remember what they saw in a book, but it takes the ability of organization and using your ideas and skills to truly be learning something; even more so to master something. Another awesome quote is, “the more powerful the curriculum, the greater the possibilities for the classroom, the teacher, and the students.” Again, I thoroughly agree! A powerful curriculum is engaging to students, it makes them want to continue on learning in your class, it makes them want to stay and keep going even after the bell has rung. I am the one who is responsible for making a curriculum and ensuring that it is meaningful and powerful. A powerful curriculum will not only engage my students and make them want to be in class and want to learn, but it will also create a bond between me and my students as well as new bonds formed between each other. I will benefit from my students eagerness to come to class everyday because of the curriculum I have created. A powerful curriculum can also help me gain respect from my students, as well as me possibly gaining a new respect for my students as I will learn more about who they are and what they think about.

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## **Christopher Vogel**

Chapter four expanded on chapter three’s idea of flexibility in the classroom. Most of the chapter talked about dealing with differentiated classrooms and being able to teach to each student. One key part of the chapter I found interesting was the discussion of how every subject has a “kindergarten version” and a “Ph.D. version.” This is an interesting perspective on teaching that would encourage adapting the classroom material to the students you have in a particular class. The book obviously does not want to say dumb a class down or smarten it up each year, but keep the material at a challenging (but not overly so) level. The chapter brings up the critical point of having students comfortable with each other and the teacher. It reminds me of what my geography teacher said about the beginning of class. If you speak at least once in the classroom out loud, you will be more comfortable speaking in discussion throughout the year. A comfortable student is more likely to share his thoughts and ideas with the class and by extension would probably improve academically and socially. One of the discussions in the chapter talks about the futility in having every student complete the same tasks with the same materials and time constraints. At no point in my education have I ever had a test where everyone in the class completed the text at the same time. In addition until I started college (and even after that), many of the students would place requests about time extensions or changes to what was being tested or the way we were being tested.

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Ashley Godbout===

In SED101 the idea of universally designed lessons was new to me. I thought it was an extremely rich

thought and was surprised how my horizons broadened just by learning about the term UDI or universally designed for all. I was extremely surprised when the book brought up that teachers who differentiate their instruction often give students who don't understand the concepts less work and give more to the ones who grasp it. I'll admit I thought this was a good idea but the book made a great point: why give students who don't get it less of what they don't get and give more of what they know to the people who do get it? This brings back the author's idea of pre-assessing students to see where their content level is. Related to these outcomes, the teacher will help remedial students become proficient in the necessary precursors and extend the knowledge of those on the extension side. As teachers we can't just think about our class as a whole. We have to effectively teach each student depending on his or her alternate paths. In a differentiated classroom every student should feel safe and welcomed! It is important for students to understand each other's commonalities and differences that will enforce respect and understanding among students. If students understand their role in the classroom and show respect towards everyone then they will inevitably gain responsibility and independence in the class. This will help to allow my classroom to run smoothly, especially if I need to work in small groups with students.

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## **Russell Warren**

Tomlinson and McTighe spell out in this chapter what I've been supposing as I read through the earlier chapters: teaching is a hugely varied and intricate job that works best when the teacher themselves addresses such intricacies. Teachers should "establish clarity... accept responsibility.. develop communities... build awareness... help students... develops flexibly... reflect on progress..." (p. 40), only a few tasks required to truly be effective. To be a successful teacher, one must first be a successful human being that is open to change and is watchful cautious of the world and people around them. I found the aspect of developing routines that actually contribute to success to be important. It may seem to work when teachers line out specific rules to keep students in check, but allowing them the opportunity to review their own actions and have a say in the management is very positive. Not only do they feel more involved, but they also gain responsibility over their actions. The authors write that "there's no such thing as the perfect lesson, the perfect day in school, or the perfect teacher," (p. 56) but it's incredibly important to strive towards those goals. Motivation and persistence may not end up creating a classroom utopia, but it keeps teachers on their toes and students in the loop.

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## **Michael Diffin**

Reading response to integrating differentiated instruction Chapter 4

This chapters focus deals with the planning behind student success, something that as teachers is a necessity to think about when planning any lesson or unit. It is broken into nine different attitudes that encompass the learners success. The first, establishing clarity about curricular essentials, deals with refining within the topic what specifically is the most significant things that need to be taught. The next, accepting responsibility for learner success, deals with the fact that in order to be better teachers we must accept the fact that what we do as teachers matters and the fact that if the student is doing poorly it may be our fault just as if they were doing well. The book emphasizes the fact that we must develop communities of respect, something that I strongly agree with, a big part of this is supporting each other. We must also build awareness of what works for each student. By doing so we can attune our lessons to best fit the students and facilitate genuine learning. The text has us take a look at developing classroom

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management to help build successful learners. Having one of these routines makes it easier for it to be a reality that all students will complete the desired tasks in the allotted time. The text teaches us the alongside the students working with the teachers the students must be aware of their own skills and goals and we must help them to figure out just what those are. These are just some of the major things we must do as teachers to facilitate genuine learning and growth within the students.

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## **Ashley Libby**

This chapter talks a lot about how to ensure student success. It is our job as a teacher to ensure that success. The biggest issue in this chapter was making sure that differentiated instruction is the method used in assuring the student and teacher success. There are many things to keep in mind when thinking about and implementing differentiated instruction. The students must have clarity of the curriculum key ideas. The teacher must be able to explain and teach the students the central idea or “representation” of the topic so they can take it with them beyond the classroom. The teacher must understand that even if they think they taught the lesson well, does not mean that all students understood what was being taught. If students do not understand what is being shown or taught to them means that the teacher did not do as well as they hoped. We, as teachers, must take responsibility if our students are not understanding or getting our lessons. Students will find that they have commonalities and differences amongst their peers. However, they must feel that the classroom is a safe environment for them but also that they will be challenged to become their best self. We must be aware of what works best for each student and knowing their intelligence can play a big part in understanding how each student learns as an individual. Classroom management, teaching strategies and routines also help in contributing to the success of the students. Making sure the students know that they have options for learning and knowing that their opinions will vary and change even day-to-day. In order for our students to have success in our classrooms, we must make sure we create the right environment and provide them with the right tools to succeed. It is our job to make sure we teach them so they can succeed outside of our classroom.

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## **Matt**

In Chapter four the focus has continued to stay on the students, and their understandings. The author continues to hammer on the importance that teachers need to teach for understanding. Why? Because having understanding means having a long lasting impact on your students. In developing my unit I have tried to focus on “the big picture” but it can be challenging for a teacher, because I personally want my students to understand the small detail oriented part as well. This way they can confidently apply their knowledge in the real world. However, in the reading I stumbled over a quote that describes how it’s the teacher’s duty to use multiple ways of instructing, so a diverse set of students can find understanding. Ultimately this will help them put it to use outside the classroom.

I took from this chapter, a further understanding of what I already wish to do as an educator. This is in one sentence; to create a long lasting understandings that will make a difference in my student’s lives. A great example is pre-assessment. One thing I plan to do, is to take the extra five or ten minutes to have my students relate the topic to real life. This will give my students a better chance to take what they have learned and use it long after the end of the unit. I will incorporate a lot of pre-assessment into my teaching because it will help me to better understand how my students will connect to the upcoming unit. If I have an understanding after my pre assessment, it will set a good base to actually start teaching.

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## Meghan

Understanding what is important for the students to learn will help the teacher to determine what content material is essential for the students to learn. In order to do this, the teacher must be organized and able to express the content in a way that the students are able to understand and use the information. Our students will learn the information best when the teachers understand why they will need to learn the information. It is essential that students understand why they need to learn the information, and this will help drive their willingness and ability to learn the needed information. Students will retain and understand the information when they understand what it is they are supposed to be accomplishing. In terms of teaching the information, it is essential for a teacher to, “help students understand, accept, and ultimately benefit from their differences” (50). Inside a teachers role is the ability to foster and develop the strengths of the students as individuals. If students are aware of their strengths, and the strengths of those around them, they will be more likely to understand what learning style works for them, and they will be able to understand the information better. As a future teacher, I hope to allow a lot of time for reflection in my classes. I think it is important for students to understand their own abilities, and they should learn to recognize their unique learning styles and any particular aspects they might need to improve their method of learning.

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## Devin Boilard

### **Chapter Four: What Really Matters in Planning for Student Success?**

Chapter Four had a plethora of great information. One of the first ideas that I connected to was in regards to why it is okay to deviate from the age-old methods of teaching, such as the reading and regurgitating of text. Changing these methods to better suit learners needs is not resorting to cheats or less than practices, it is the goal that should remain intact not our methods to get achieve it. In correlation to this, another valid point expressed in this chapter was in our perceptions of students who possess fewer capabilities or content knowledge than the majority of our students. Our approach towards them should not be to dumb things down or offer a weaker workload; our focus is quality not quantity. Again this brings us back to goals, it is important to reach the goal and that can only be accomplished if we help the student find the right path, by the end we have all made the journey no matter the factors we encountered along the way. Within my own personal thoughts, the talk of DI and ranging levels of content knowledge and ability has brought to light the ideas of peer perception on how others are learning. I remember being called into the gifted and talented program as an elementary student and I recall times when I was not, those feelings impacted me greatly. How we encourage and promote the learning of each of our students without making them feel less than or without increasing their ego to the point of implied hierarchy is so important. The outlined suggestions on page 46 I purposefully marked so as to find it in the future. Creating a safe and comfortable learning environment while also stressing the importance of respect and camaraderie is a lesson that should be included in every class no matter the concentration.

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## Tyler Michaud

The fourth chapter of *Integrating Differentiated Instruction + Understanding by Design*, by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe, focused on what is vital to the content. One of the key aspects of this chapter was catering to the individual needs of the students. Teachers have several responsibilities; first

being that the students are meeting the standards expected of them; a well focused curriculum meets the individual learning needs of every student, and through this, success will be achieved. *“If we see ourselves predominately as teachers of curriculum- even exemplary curriculum- we have forgotten half of our professional role. We are also teachers of human beings”* The authors stated, *“The essence of our jobs is making sure that the curriculum serves as a catalyst for powerful learning...”* (pgs. 38-39) To me, the responsibilities of teachers are expressed perfectly in the above quotation. It is important to not only have an awareness of each students' learning style, but also their background. By incorporating work that the students can relate to their learning experience will be enhanced.

In my own classroom, I will make it a goal to get to know my students. Personally, the teachers that stood out to me in high school were the teachers that allowed me to incorporate my own passions into my work, nothing invigorates a person more than excitement. These teachers were able to do so by knowing me both professionally and personally. Though it will be intimidating trying to develop a trusting relationship with my students, I know it is essential to learning. Hopefully, my field experience will help me develop a certain comfort for getting to know the students.

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Tyler Brown

One concept about differentiating instruction that really stuck out to me in this chapter stated: “It is the case in many classrooms now that teachers attempt to ‘differentiate’ instruction by giving struggling students less to do and... advanced students more to do than other learners” (p.41). I can recall seeing this pitfall time and time again throughout my own educational experiences. Even recently at MBHS, where students are grouped into classes according to their “ability level”, I have witnessed this type of “differentiated” instruction and the negative effects of it. Students considered to be “low-performing” come into the classroom already struggling with the content area are then given assignments that lack any critical thinking opportunities to expand their understanding and instead spoon-fed the content from a projector and instructed to copy it down onto their study guides. Once this was done, the test was handed out and students used the information they just copied on a study guide to fill out the test. A minority students at least found the value of accepting the “easy-A” and did the work while others were so disengaged that they couldn’t care about the content or their grade enough to even copy and paste the information a couple times and ace the test. This vividly illustrates the need for differentiating instruction as described in the chapter. Such concepts as: establishing clarity about curricular essentials, accepting responsibility for learner success, developing communities of respect, and other core principles of the chapter were completely ignored in this classroom and the evidence of it was portrayed openly by the student’s body language and actions. The student’s looked as though they had no idea why they were even there, openly expressed negative attitudes towards each other and the class, and when I attempted to reflect with my mentor later as to why such things were happening, he was able to sum it up by saying “this is a very-low performing group”. My hope is that by understanding this chapter and sharing that experience with you guys, it becomes evident to us that, in the very least, NOT implementing some of these instructional techniques and practices can have devastating effects on the educational system, and more importantly the students themselves.

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